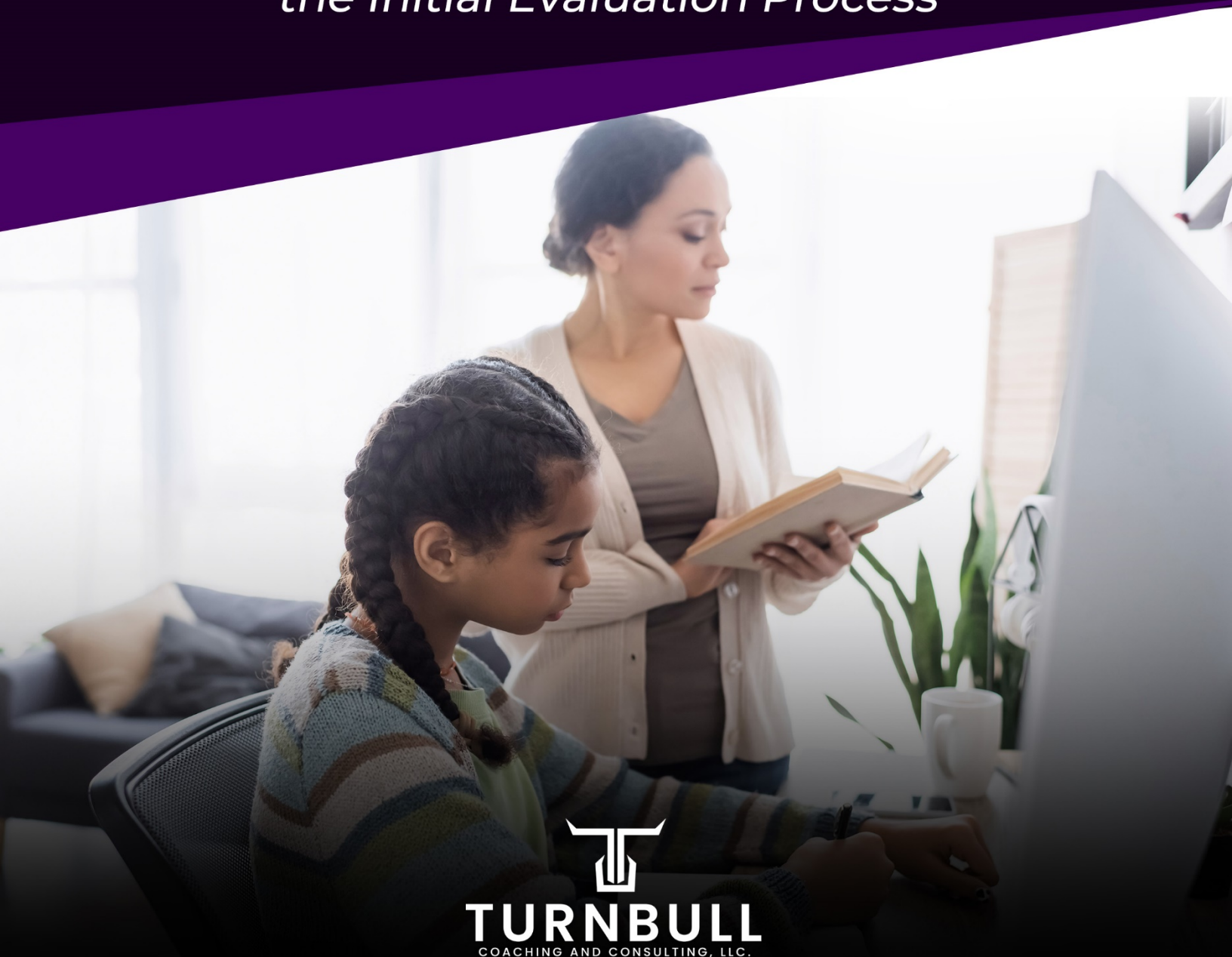


I THINK MY CHILD HAS A LEARNING DISABILITY... NOW WHAT?

*A Parent's Guide to Understanding
the Initial Evaluation Process*



TURNBULL
COACHING AND CONSULTING, LLC.

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Reserves The Right To Alter And Update His Opinion Based On

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INTRODUCTION



A learning disability (LD) is a group of disorders that negatively impact the ability to learn. Learning disabilities make it more challenging to learn how to read, write, do math, listen, and speak.

Those with learning disabilities very often show a large discrepancy between their intelligence and their school performance. In fact, a learning disability is only diagnosed in those with at least an IQ of 85!

Intelligence is rarely an issue in those with a learning disability.

Learning disabilities are lifelong conditions that can be very successfully managed, but never go away. Once you have a learning disorder, you have it for life.

Learning disabilities are successfully managed with proper identification and academic intervention.

In fact, there are many people you're familiar with that have learning disabilities, and many famous historical figures are believed to have had learning disabilities as well.

We have made major steps toward understanding what they look like and how we address them.

These include:

- Tom Cruise
- Harriet Tubman
- Muhammed Ali
- Solange Knowles
- Justin Timberlake
- Thomas Jefferson
- Albert Einstein
- Whoopi Goldberg

That's a pretty successful group of people! You can see that there's plenty of hope for any child to have a successful life, whether they suffer from a learning disability or not.

Learning disabilities are more common than you might think.

- Nearly 1 out of 5 people in the US has a learning disability.
- Nearly 3 million children between the ages of 6 and 21 have some form of learning disability and receive special education services.

No one is certain what causes learning disabilities. However, there is no doubt that genetics and the brain play a big role. A child is up to 10 times more likely to have a learning disability if a parent or sibling has a learning disability. Several genes that play a role in learning disabilities have been identified.

Studies have shown that the structure and activity of the brains of those with learning disabilities are often different from those of people without learning disabilities.

There are laws in the United States that include provisions for those with learning challenges. It's important to understand your child's rights if you're going to be the best possible advocate for them.

Consider these laws:

1. IDEA for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This law was passed in 1990 and guarantees that special needs students receive free public education that is appropriate and the least restrictive as possible for their individual needs.
2. IEP or Individualized Education Programs/Plan. This is part of IDEA. It requires teachers of those with special needs to develop IEPs that specifically address your child's specific needs. IEPs must:
 - Be in writing
 - Include the parents' involvement in their development
 - Include measurable goals
 - Provide parents the right to dispute any issues with the school district through a third party
3. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This forbids the discrimination of students with disabilities within an educational setting. This law applies to elementary schools, secondary schools, and even colleges and universities.

There are other applicable laws and statutes, but these are the most useful to know and understand if you want to be in the best position to help your child.

A learning disability can be a significant challenge to overcome, but with your help your child can find success and happiness.

Consider these topics as a way to learn more about your child's learning disability and the role you play:

1. Chapter 1: Types of Learning Disabilities. There's more than one type of learning disability. You'll learn about the five types and the general characteristics of each.
2. Chapter 2: How to Recognize a Learning Disability in Your Child. While a proper diagnosis is best left to the professionals, every parent should know the common signs of a learning disability.
3. Chapter 3: Testing. There are many potential tests your child could receive if a learning disability is suspected. Most importantly, you'll learn how to request testing from your child's school and ensure that it gets done.

4. Chapter 4: What Parents Can Do at Home to Help Children With Learning Disabilities. You might not be an expert on learning disabilities, but there's still a lot that you can do to help your child. Understand the role you can play in your child's life to ease the challenge of a learning disability.
5. Chapter 5: Self-Esteem. Self-esteem can be challenging for all of us, but it can be even more challenging when you have a learning disability. You'll learn how to help your child feel better about themselves and their future.
6. Chapter 6: How to Help a Child After a Hard Day. Understand how to make the most of those heartbreaking days when your child comes home in tears or enraged.
7. Chapter 7: How to Interact With Your Child's School. This is a tricky subject, but you'll be better prepared and more capable of getting your child the help they need.

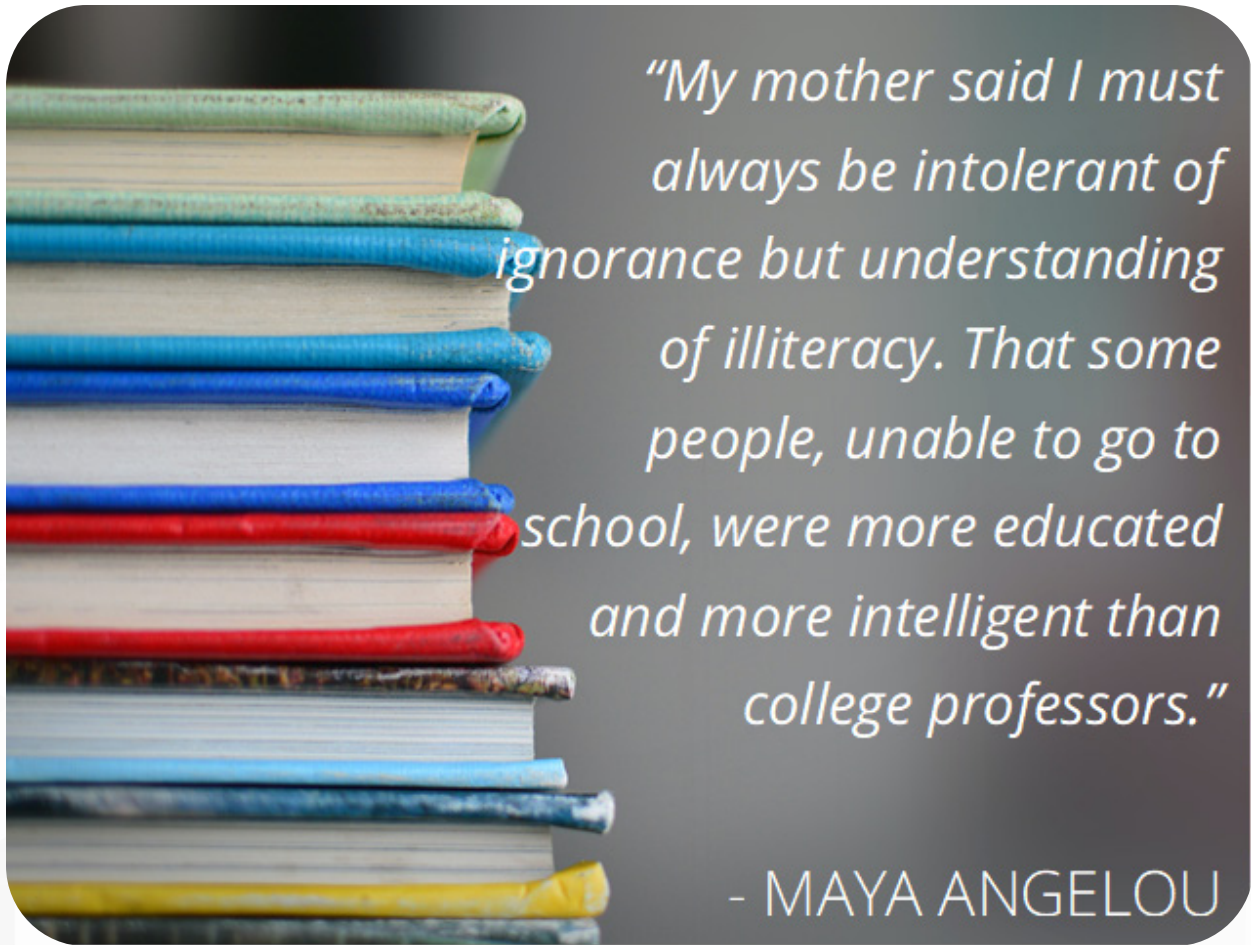
CHAPTER 1

TYPES OF LEARNING DISABILITIES



There are a few different types of learning disabilities, but they fall into five broad categories. While it's possible to have multiple learning disabilities, it's most common to only have one.

While you're reading the list below, see if you can guess which is the most common. If you think your child might have a learning disorder, see which one is most applicable to your child.



Learning disabilities can be generalized to five categories:

1. **ADHD.** Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder affects more than six million children. While it is not considered by some to be a true learning disorder, there is no doubt that ADHD makes learning more challenging.
 - ADHD makes it much more challenging for students to focus and maintain their attention. They are easily distracted and commonly cause disruptions in the classroom.
 - ADHD is most commonly treated with medication and behavior modification. Specific learning strategies are not typically used with those students that have ADHD.

2. **Dyslexia.** If you asked someone to name a learning disability, this is the response you'd most likely hear. Dyslexia is a learning disorder that affects the ability to read and understand text. Dyslexia can have one or more effects:
 - Difficulty in distinguishing between word sounds that are similar
 - Difficulty in reading at a reasonable pace and without errors
 - Difficulty in spelling and reading comprehension
 - Difficulty in seeing the differences between letters
3. **Dyscalculia.** This is a learning disorder specific to learning and understanding math concepts. The effects of dyscalculia include:
 - Challenges related to time, estimation, and measurement
 - An inability to understand the ordering of numbers
 - Challenges with basic math calculations
 - Dyslexia can also create math challenges.
4. **Dysgraphia.** This disorder creates challenges in writing. Dysgraphia can present itself in several ways:
 - Physical challenges with holding a pencil or with maintaining a proper posture while writing
 - Challenges with organizing thoughts
 - Writing that is repetitive
 - Leaving out words that are critical to the sentence
 - Challenges with sentence structure and grammar
5. **Processing deficits.** Students with a processing deficit have difficulty with processing and interpreting sensory data accurately. The most common deficits relate to visual or auditory information. This creates challenges for comprehension and memory.

Did any of those categories seem to apply to your child? This is not an exhaustive list, but 5 common issues that relate to learning disabilities. Reading disorders are the most common. According to Wiley Communications, the average American reads at an 8th grade level.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A LEARNING DISABILITY IN YOUR CHILD



Many children have challenges from time to time at school, but these struggles are most often not related to a learning disorder. All learning disabilities should be diagnosed by a professional, but you can take a pretty good guess if you know the signs. There are eight common signs that suggest a learning disorder might be present.

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE ONE OF THESE SIGNS?

1. Difficulty telling time. Does your child seem to have more difficulty than other children when dealing with clocks and time? Does your child not seem to be able to comprehend the difference between five minutes passing and twenty minutes? If so, it's possible that your child has a learning disorder.
2. Poor memory. A child without a learning disorder generally has a pretty good memory. If your child's memory reminds you of your aging parent's memory, this is another sign that your child could have a learning disorder.
3. Challenges related to paying attention. Does your child seem to have significantly more difficulty focusing or sitting still? With this symptom, think about it as a prolonged issue, not happening once or twice.
4. Clumsiness. Clumsiness itself has no direct effect on learning, aside from learning to write. However, physical clumsiness can be a clue that their brain isn't processing information normally. It can look like continuously tripping, bumping into things, dropping things, or a sense of absentmindedness.
5. Challenges with reading or writing. Learning disabilities related to reading and writing can be spotted early if you're working with your child on these important skills. Is your child reading well below other children of the same age? Is their writing very poor compared to their peers?
6. Math struggles. Does your child seem to have difficulties with math that seem unusual? Math is one of those subjects that many students struggle with, but a math-related learning disability is far more pronounced.
7. Challenges with following directions. This can be a sign of ADHD or a processing deficit.
8. An inability to differentiate between different letters, numbers, and sounds. A child with a learning disability can struggle to notice the difference between a "b" and a "d", between different numbers, or the difference between similar phonetic sounds.

These are the most common signs, but there are several others:

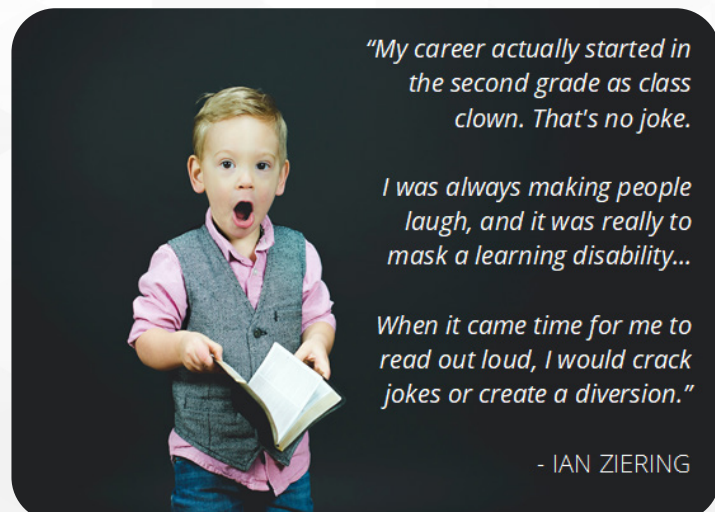
- Responds poorly to a change in routine
- Reverses numbers or letters, or puts numbers or letters in the wrong sequence
- Difficulty remembering what was heard
- Impulsive, restless, or easily distracted
- Difficulty sounding out words
- Variable performance at school - does well one day and poorly the next
- Immature speech

If you have a child that hasn't started school yet, consider these signs of learning disabilities. Catching symptoms or signs early play a significant role in intervention:

- Delayed language and speech development
- Difficulty rhyming words
- Difficulty learning colors, numbers, letters, and shapes
- Challenges with coordination. Can your child use scissors, manage buttons and zippers, copy shapes?

Do any of these signs seem to apply to your child? If so, it's time to get your child tested.

We'll cover testing in the next chapter. If you don't see any of these signs, your child probably doesn't have a learning disability, but you can never be too careful. Reach out to your child's school and request testing if you think that it's a possibility. Getting your child assistance for deficits only help. Schools typically have a tiered intervention system that helps identify children who have severe deficits.



CHAPTER 3

TESTING



So, you've decided that your child might have a learning disability or the school has contacted you. What are your options as a parent?

The first step is to make contact your child's school and pediatrician. Your school knows how to test and evaluate a student to determine if a learning disorder is present. Schools are required by law to identify children in need of special education services through a process called Child Find. If your child has been identified by the school as possibly needing services, it is imperative to find out:

- How did the school or teacher come to this conclusion?
- What interventions have been tried or implemented?
- What data has been collected?
- How and who has interpreted the data?
- Has the teacher been in communication with you about your child's deficits and progress?

As a parent, you can get the evaluation process started. Never give up until your child has been fully evaluated. We'll go over a sample request at the end of this chapter. Using some of the information covered, parents should ask themselves:

- What signs or symptoms am I seeing?
- When did I recognize it to be a problem?
- What have I done to intervene?
- How often have I communicated with the teacher or the school?
- Is the pediatrician aware of what I'm noticing?

Contacting your pediatrician is important because they have the ability to diagnose ADHD and provide referrals if necessary.

There are several types of tests used to diagnose a learning disability:

1. **Achievement Tests.** Achievement tests measure how much a student knows. This is different from an aptitude or intelligence test. There are several achievement tests your school system might use. A few examples include:
 - Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (KTEA)
 - Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)
 - Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement (WJ)
 - These tests measure the math, reading, and writing level of your child compared to other students in the same grade.
2. **Intelligence Tests.** Everyone is familiar with the idea of an intelligence test and IQ. Intelligence test results can help to pinpoint weaknesses and facilitate additional testing. Common intelligence tests include:
 - Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC)
 - Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)
 - Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI)
 - Differential Abilities Scale (DAS)
 - Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities

3. Visual Motor Integration Tests. These tests take a look at how well your child's brain is able to correlate visual cues with motor skills. For example, can your child draw what they see? Tests in this category include:
 - Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test
 - Development Test of Visual Motor Integration

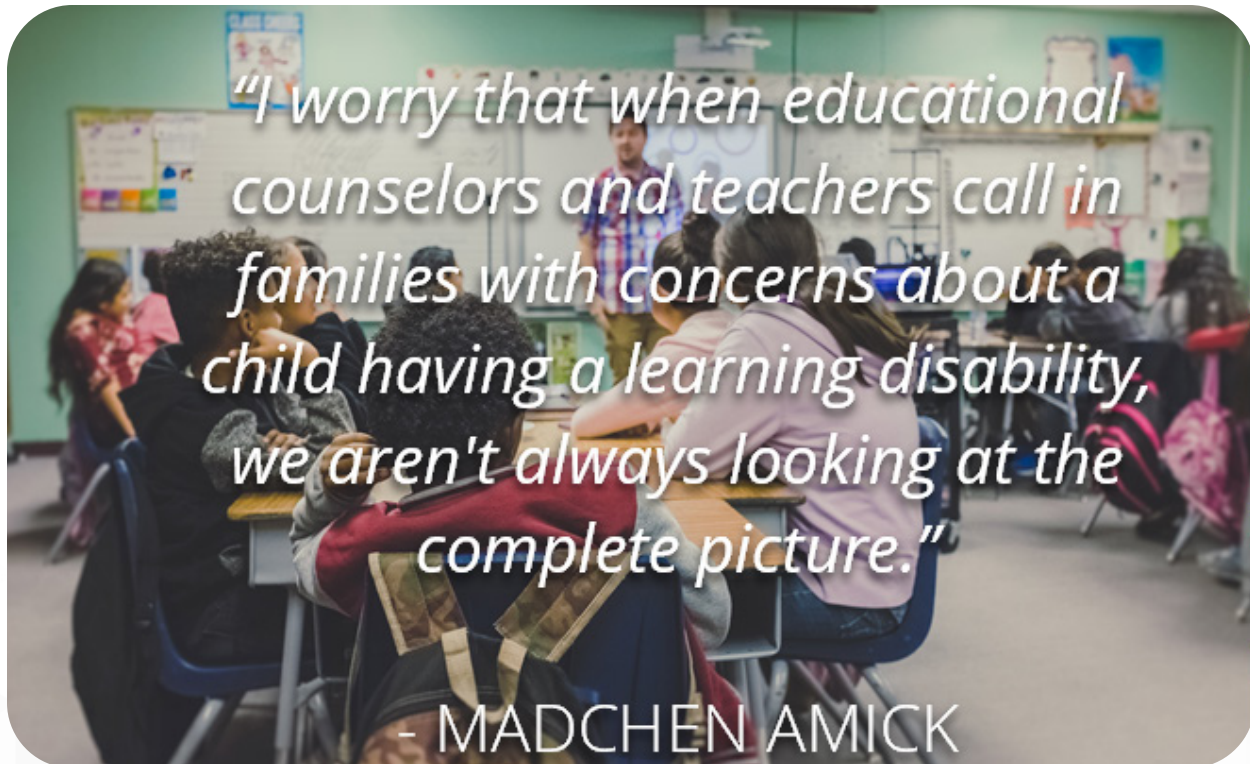
4. Language Tests. Language tests evaluate how well your child can comprehend written and spoken language. A couple of the commonly used tests in this category include:
 - Goldman Fristoe Test of Articulation
 - Test of Language Development
 - Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF)

5. ADHD Tests. These tests measure your child's ability to focus and sit still for a reasonable amount of time for their age. Tests include:
 - Vanderbilt Assessment Scales
 - Conner's Parent and Teacher Rating Scales
 - Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales

Please keep in mind that there are many more tests available in each category than the few that are listed. Your school district has chosen a set of tests that it deems suitable for identifying learning disabilities.

The trick is to get your child tested.

Note: A student who is an English Language Learner does not allow qualify as a student with a disability. Language acquisition is different from a language deficit disorder. There are tests and stages that ELL students are measured with and must command. ELL services are not special education services.



GETTING THE TESTING PROCESS STARTED

Communication is key. Many times, the school sees what you see. There may have been times when parents were dismissed or it was said, "Oh, your child is just lazy." "They can do the work. They just don't try." If you know that is not the case, don't give up. It's important to formally request in writing that your child be tested. Address your request to the proper person. Who is the proper person?

The proper person is someone with one of the following titles:

- Director of Special Education Services
- Director of Special Services
- Director of Student Services

This information should be easily found via a quick internet search or on your school district's website. Pick up the phone if all else fails. If the school does not have a lead special education person, contact the district representative. They must have someone.

It's important to make your request in writing. Most times you can send in or walk in your written request to the special education lead. If the school initiates the request for evaluation, there is a document they must submit along with evidence of student work and progress.

Here is a sample letter that you can modify to suit your needs:

Dear Mr./Ms. (name):

I am formally requesting an evaluation of my son/daughter (name, id, grade, teacher) for the presence of learning disabilities and the possible need of special education services as stipulated under IDEA and Section 504.

I have concerns for the following reasons:

(provide a list of concerns/observations)

I would like to meet with each evaluator of my child, so I am able to provide my perspective and input prior to the evaluation. I am also requesting a copy of the reports related to each evaluation prior to the 504 Plan and IEP meetings which I will attend.

Please contact me so that we can begin the process of helping my child.

Sincerely,

(name)

You can get your child tested if you're determined and follow the designated channels. Follow the basic outline above, and you shouldn't have any issues. Be assertive, persistent, and polite. You'll get what you want if you don't give up.

"SO, FOR EXAMPLE, IF A CHILD IS LABELED AS HAVING A LEARNING DISABILITY, IT HAS VERY CONCRETE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE KINDS OF SERVICES AND POTENTIALLY ACCOMMODATIONS THAT CHILD WILL GET."

- ROBERT STERNBERG

CHAPTER 4

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO AT HOME TO HELP CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES



Being the parent of a child with learning disabilities can be very challenging. The process of discovering that a child has a learning disability can be difficult on the parents.

There can be feelings of grief and confusion. Having a child with a learning disability isn't something that any parent expects. It's certainly not anything that most parents are trained to deal with.

However, once the shock and confusion has subsided, it's time to get to work and make the best of the situation. There are many aspects to having a child with a learning disability that must be addressed.

Help your child to have the best life possible with these strategies:

1. Have your child's vision and hearing checked. Younger children don't know what normal vision and hearing are. They only know what they've experienced. It can be helpful to ensure that your child is seeing and hearing properly.
2. Be patient. It's not easy to come to grips with the fact that your child might be a whiz in math but has the reading level of someone much younger. It's challenging when your child is the smartest kid you know, but they can't pay attention long enough to learn anything or to take a test at school.
 - Your child isn't like most children when it comes to learning. Patience and flexibility are important.
3. Be organized. You have all the responsibilities of other parents with children in school, plus a few more. You might have additional teachers, social workers, doctors, and psychologists to deal with. You'll probably have to spend extra time at night helping your child with their schoolwork.
 - There's also a chance that your child will be less organized than most, which creates additional challenges.
4. Navigate family issues. A learning disability can be difficult for the entire family.
 - Siblings can resent the extra time and attention given to a child with a learning disability.
 - Siblings can believe that the learning-disabled child is simply lazy or misbehaving willfully.
 - Often one parent is especially resistant to the idea of a child having a learning disability. There can be a strain on the relationship or marriage.
 - In the case of ADHD, a child's behavior can be erratic, especially in public. This can create a lot of anxiety for everyone involved.
 - It's often the mom that is left to deal with all of this family chaos. Coaching or counseling can help.
5. Create routines. Change and unpredictability can create additional stress in children with learning disabilities. It can help to have a structured home life regarding chores, play/free time, meals, homework, showering, and bedtime.

6. Empower your child. A child with a learning disability can feel inadequate and powerless. Show your child that they do have the power to change themselves and to make things happen:
 - Set some simple goals with your child and help them to achieve those goals.
 - Give your child chores that they can successfully complete.
 - Give older children errands to run.
 - Let your child make dinner one night.
 - Help your child to solve problems rather than simply feeding the solution to them.
7. Help your child with their relationships. A learning disability can have a huge (or a minimal) impact on your child's relationships. Many children with learning disabilities have difficulty picking up on social cues, interpreting language, understanding jokes, and managing their behavior.
 - Coach your child on how to behave in common social situations if necessary. Role play with your child.
 - If your child is younger, explain the situation to other parents, so they can coach their own children.
 - Help your child to reach out and make friends. If appropriate, create playdates for your child to spend time with other children.
8. Boost your child's self-esteem. When a child is different from other children, their self-esteem often suffers. This is such a big topic that the next chapter focuses on this issue.
9. Help your child with their homework. Your school should provide you with guidance on how to best help your child at home. Follow their advice.
 - It can also be helpful to learn more about your child's learning disability. You might discover an idea or two that's helpful.
 - Share your own ideas with your child's teachers, too.

Helping your child isn't just the responsibility of the school system. There is a lot you can do as a parent, too. One main thing is to be involved. Be in the know.

- Know who your child's friends are.
- Know if they are doing schoolwork at home and in school.
- Know their online habits.

Your child's home environment has a big impact on his academic success. Do your part to help your child to thrive. Be patient, develop routines, and empower your child to be all they can be.

"HE WHO STUDIES BOOKS ALONE WILL KNOW HOW THINGS OUGHT TO BE,
AND HE WHO STUDIES MEN WILL KNOW HOW THEY ARE."
- CHARLES CALEB COLTON

CHAPTER 5

SELF-ESTEEM



A learning disability can be a real challenge to your child's self-esteem. Children of all ages are naturally over-concerned about how they are viewed by their classmates. Children are also likely to torment those that are viewed as different in any way. It's a perfect storm for lowering a child's self-esteem.

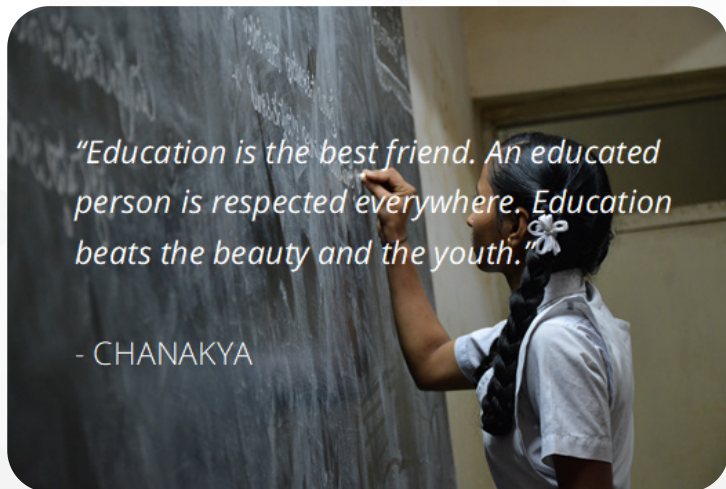
Struggling in school is another challenge to your child's self-esteem. It can be hard to deal with the fact that everyone else is achieving success more easily.

Boost your child's self-esteem with these strategies:

1. Celebrate progress. Making progress is one of the most important components of happiness. A "C" on a test isn't as good as an "A," but it's a huge step up from an "F." Any improvement in behavior, reading skill, writing, math, or focus is worthy of attention and praise.

2. Encourage effort. Results are hard to guarantee, but effort is under the control of your child. Encourage your child to do their best and be generous with your praise when they do. Grades might have to take a backseat to effort for some students.
3. Give them your time and attention. Treat your child like they're special, because they are! Spend time with them on a regular basis and give them your full attention when you do.
4. Remind them of their strengths. A child with a learning disability is focused on what they do poorly. Remind them of what they do well. They might not read well, but there are plenty of other things they can do well.
5. Have reasonable expectations. Setting reasonable expectations can help your child to feel better about themselves. If a child will only be satisfied with being the best in class, they're likely to be disappointed. Help your child to have reasonable goals and expectations.
6. Find ways for your child to be involved with the world. Show your child that there's more to life than just school. There are plenty of other ways to have an influence on the world. They can volunteer, start a website, create a small business, get a job, or plant a garden.

Nearly all children struggle with self-esteem issues at times. It's a common challenge for adults, too. It can be harder for children with a learning disability to feel good about themselves when they see other children doing things in school that they struggle to do. One of the greatest things a parent can do for their child is to boost their self-esteem.



CHAPTER 6

HOW TO HELP A CHILD AFTER A HARD DAY



If you've ever had a child come home from school in tears after a hard day, you know how gut wrenching it can be. Naturally, you're very protective of your child, and their pain becomes your pain. We all know how cruel children can be, and even some teachers can be quite unkind at times, unfortunately.

It's also hard for a child to see everyone else learning easily and effectively while they themselves are trying so hard and still struggling.

Whether your child is just struggling with school, being bullied, or ostracized, it can be challenging not to overreact. Rest assured, there are things you can do without marching down to school and beating up the bully yourself.

Try these techniques to brighten your child's bad day:

1. Steady yourself. Take a long, slow breath and steady yourself. Your child is upset. If you get upset, your child will be even more upset. It's also difficult to make wise decisions when you're upset. The best thing you can do in this situation is relax.
2. Put your listening ears on. It's time to listen. Avoid asking too many questions until your child has finished speaking. Just sit back, close your mouth, and open your mind.
3. Get the whole story. Once your child has finished his story, it's time to ask questions and fill in the blanks. Consider everything you've heard and your child's tendencies. Ask the appropriate questions and get a complete picture of the events.
4. Find solutions together. Now is not the time to decide unilaterally what you're going to do. Your child will be unlikely to confide in you again if you're unreasonable. Avoid taking any action that your child disapproves of unless you have a legitimate reason to believe that your child is at risk of real harm.
 - Brainstorm ideas and find a solution you can both live with.
5. See how involved your child wants you to be. Your child might want you to be very involved. On the other hand, they might prefer that you stay out of it for now.
6. Get on the same page with the school. Ensure that you and the school are communicating freely. It can be less stressful on your child if you and the school are working from the same playbook.
7. End on a positive note. Be grateful that your child was willing to share their bad day with you. It might be a good time for an ice cream cone or other small pleasure.
 - It won't take long for your child's brain to make the connection between sharing their feelings and good things happening. You're simply greasing the tracks for a repeat in the future.
 - If the session ends poorly, you're going to have a far more difficult time getting information in the future. Never fear, there is always a way back into the game.

Everyone has the occasional bad day. As a parent, you can help your child to have a better day. Each bad day presents the opportunity to resolve a challenge and potentially prevent the same negative experience from happening again in the future. Teach your child how to effectively deal with those inevitable bad days.

“NO ONE HAS YET REALIZED THE WEALTH OF SYMPATHY, THE KINDNESS AND GENEROSITY HIDDEN IN THE SOUL OF A CHILD. THE EFFORT OF EVERY TRUE EDUCATION SHOULD BE TO UNLOCK THAT TREASURE.”
- EMMA GOLDMAN

CHAPTER 7

HOW TO INTERACT WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL



When dealing with your child's school, you have a fine line to walk, between being too passive and accommodating and making a nuisance of yourself.

Consider the perspective of the average teacher or education administrator. Like everyone else, they feel overworked, under-appreciated, and underpaid. They are human, too. A cooperative stance will more than likely produce a positive outcome.

However, if you're unwilling to be assertive, some of the people that are in a position to help your child might give less than their best effort and simply go through the motions. Be persistent and consistent.

Yet, if you're too pushy and demanding, they're not going to like you. As a consequence, they might interact with your child differently, which is a huge obstacle for your child to overcome. That shouldn't be the case, but has been known to happen.

The key is to show the school that:

- You're taking this seriously.
- You're not going to go away.
- You know your rights, and you also know the school's legal obligations to your child.
- You're willing to hold them accountable, but you're also interested in being a positive part of the process.
- You accept that you're not the expert and will give their plans a fair chance to succeed or fail.

It can be challenging to find the right temperature when dealing with your child's school. Even the most passive adults can be quite a handful when their child is involved. You don't want to make things harder for the situation or your child by getting carried away.

Whether your child is struggling academically, being bullied, or butting heads with a teacher, there's a right way and wrong way to handle the situation.

The goal is to be an effective advocate for your child, not to be labeled as an impossible parent.

These tips will help you to communicate effectively with your child's school:

1. Avoid going over the teacher's head. Speak with the relevant teacher rather than going to the principal, school board, or superintendent. There's a time for everything, and now probably isn't that time. Of course, if the situation calls for more drastic action, take it.
2. Think long-term. You might want to take a bite out of a teacher but remember that your relationship with this teacher can last for nine months or more. Teachers are people with feelings. Making them feel bad might not be in your child's best interest.
3. Be specific. Teachers are busy. It's important to have a point and to get to it. Explain what you believe is the issue and relay your child's thoughts on the matter. Be respectful.

4. Listen. Be sure to listen to the teacher's response. Remember that there are two sides to every story. Be willing to listen and consider that your initial impression may have been wrong.
5. Reach an agreement. Restate what you now believe to be the correct interpretation of events. Agree on what the problem is and then agree on a plan of action that best supports your child. If necessary, set a future meeting to review any progress made.
6. Show gratitude. If you're happy with the outcome, show appreciation for the teacher and their effort. Be polite even if you're displeased.

WHAT IF YOU'RE DISPLEASED? WHAT IS THE NEXT COURSE OF ACTION?

The school principal is the next step. However, keep in mind that the default position of many principals is to side with the teacher unless the teacher is clearly out of line.

If you're unable to find a resolution to the situation, you could request that your child be allowed to change classes. This request is rarely denied unless it's simply impossible to accommodate. Remember to be polite and professional at all times!

"A country so rich that it can send people to the moon still has hundreds of thousands of its citizens who can't read. That's terribly troubling to me."

- CHARLES KURALT



GET AHEAD OF THE GAME

There are several things that parents can do to get ahead of the game. This list is not exhaustive, but a combination of experience and a list adapted from the Parent and Teen Communication.

1. **Attend in-person and virtual school events.** Get to know your teen's teachers in the beginning of the school year. Meeting other families plays a significant part to child development. Attending parent-teacher conferences gives you opportunity to align with the school.
2. **Ensure to outline communication with teacher(s).** This should be on the teacher's to-do list, but in case it isn't be prepared to inquire about best way of communication. Some schools have universal apps they use like Class Dojo, Remind 101, and School Messenger to name a few. Don't be afraid to speak up for your adolescent's needs. They are never too old for you to get involved.
3. **Illustrate education positively in the home environment.** Parental school involvement does not only occur inside the schools. It is also about communicating your larger values and attitudes regarding education and the hopes, dreams, and expectations you hold for your children. Communicating these values motivates young people to be persistent when faced with challenging educational tasks.
4. **Encourage reading.** Helping your children develop a love of reading is the single most important thing you can do to help them succeed in school and in life. Show them the importance of lifelong learning by reading books on your own. Even better, read the same book with them. Taking it one step further, discuss the book together afterwards!
5. **Help manage the homework process.** Let your teen know you think education is important and that homework is a priority. Set aside a special place to study and establish a regular time for homework. Help your child stay organized, ask about daily assignments, and monitor their work. Always remember to notice and praise effort.

6. **Attend school events.** Go to games and concerts, student exhibitions, and award events that your teen is and is not involved in. Your involvement in school-wide events, even when your tween or teen is not directly involved, helps build a community at large. You'll meet other members of the school community and show your support for ALL kids.
7. **Attend parent organization meetings.** At most schools, parents meet regularly to discuss school issues. Join the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) or PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) to work with other families to improve the school. If you can't attend the meetings in-person, ask to join the meetings virtually or ask for the notes to be emailed or sent to you.
8. **Volunteer in the school.** Schools often allow volunteers to chaperone trips or dances, help in classrooms, or run a school event. If your work schedule doesn't allow you to volunteer in the school building, there are other ways to offer your time. You can volunteer to translate newsletters into other languages, make phone calls to let others know about school-related activities, or work on materials for school events. Be on the lookout for volunteer opportunities and share your special skills!
9. **Let the school know what groups, classes or guidance you would like them to provide.** Schools are a great resource to improve your own learning. If you want to know more about the school's new math curriculum, how to talk with your teen about relationships, or how to help your teen apply to financial aid, let the school know! Chances are if you want to learn more about a topic, other parents do as well.
10. **Encourage active learning.** Young people need to be encouraged to ask and answer questions, solve problems, and explore their interests. Have frequent conversations about what they are learning and be prepared to ask questions. When you encourage this type of learning at home, your teen's participation and interest in school may increase.
11. **Learn about your rights.** It's important to know what your rights are as a parent when it comes to special services such as English instruction, immigration status, individualized education plans, and more. Learn more in [Your Rights as the Parent of a School-aged Student.](#)

Build as much goodwill as possible:

- Sign and turn in permission slips on time.
- Sign report cards.
- Answer school emails.
- Fill out school surveys.
- Ensure that your child has their homework done each day.
- Ensure that your child has good attendance.
- Check the class website each day for announcements.
- Give occasional good feedback to the teacher.
- Ensure that your child has the necessary items for school that day: books, calculator, musical instrument, crayons, scissors, earbuds, tablet, and so on.

Be a positive contribution to your child's development. It's great to be proactive when you have a child with a learning disability.

CONCLUSION

Having a child diagnosed with a learning disability can be overwhelming for a parent. But it can also be a source of relief. If your child has been struggling with school, it can be nice to finally have some answers.

All parents should know the signs of learning disabilities. Check the list of signs in this eBook and consider if any of them apply to your child. While your school system should spot learning disabilities in its students as they are legally obligated through Child Find, however, students do slip through the cracks for several reasons .

If you suspect that your child has a learning disability but hasn't been tested, it's critical to get them the testing they need.

In most school districts, this isn't a problem, but it can be challenging in others. Be persistent and understand your child's rights under the law. Keep at it until your requests are met.

A learning disability diagnosis can seem like the end of your child's hopes and dreams, but there are many famous actors, writers, scientists, and others that overcame learning disabilities. Your child can be one of the success stories with your help.

